

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 28 MAY 2002

REVIEW OF SCHOOL BASED TECHNICIANS SERVICE

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To advise Elected Members of the outcome of the review of the School Technicians Service and seek approval to implement the review recommendations, subject to the matter being referred to the Corporate Sub-Committee, in respect of their interests.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1** The introduction of a “Teaching Profession for the 21st Century” (known as the McCrone agreement) identified a need for teachers to be relieved of routine administrative duties. These included tasks such as the repair and maintenance of information communication technology (ICT) and audio visual (AV) resources. In this way teachers would have more time to teach. This echoed the findings of the document jointly published by Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Education and the Accounts Commission, “Time for Teaching”. As a result of this background, it was considered prudent to review the School Technician service to ensure that it was providing a service that would meet the demands of schools in the 21st century.
- 2.2** A comprehensive consultation with head teachers revealed a universal desire for enhancement to the school-based technicians service.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- 3.1.1** The duties and responsibilities of Technicians are out of date and no longer reflect the service and activities being undertaken in schools.
- 3.1.2** There has been an increasing demand for more assistance from technicians (except AVA technicians) by schools. This to support the teaching staff and pupils due to the expansion of practical assignment work required within the 5 – 14 Curriculum, as a result of the new National Qualifications framework. The McCrone Agreement has further raised awareness of this issue.
- 3.1.3** Duties arising from Health and Safety legislation such as. COSHH regulations, have become part of Technicians duties in recent years. Limited testing of portable electrical appliances under the PAT Regulations has been undertaken by technicians in their own departments. However there is

statutory requirement under the Health and Safety legislation for the tests to be carried out in all school departments.

- 3.1.4** The role of the AVA Technician has been declining with the introduction of new technology such as computers, digital video discs (DVD). Meanwhile there has been a diminishing demand for technician support for use of overhead projectors, video recorders and conventional film projectors.
- 3.1.5** There is an increasing need for a post of ICT Technician to be established within schools as there has been a substantial increase in the use of computers within schools in general. There is an increasing expectation that computers will be in active use across the curriculum and in all sectors.
- 3.1.6** Currently a Schools ICT Co-ordinator (grade SO5) and two Support Analysts (grade AP5/SO2) are employed to co-ordinate and provide a technical support service for computer systems in schools.
- 3.1.7** There is scope to rationalise the current distribution of Technicians' posts across the Authority, taking account of current workloads.
- 3.1.8** The formal introduction of EAGER for non teaching employees will assist in the identification of development needs for Technicians and Senior Technicians within schools.

3.2 PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS AND SERVICES

- 3.2.1** The 5-14 curriculum programme is leading to a closer working relationship between primary schools and secondary schools. This is being further enhanced by the learning partnership approach currently being implemented within the Department of Educational and Social Services.
- 3.2.2** In addition, the number of computers within Primary Schools has increased significantly since 1996 and a further increase in numbers is anticipated over the next few years.
- 3.2.3** Currently ICT services are available to primary schools from the three specialists mentioned in paragraph 3.1.6 above. In addition, two ICT Technicians are employed to provide first line technical software support. Consultations have identified a need for an increase in ICT support to deal with basic queries and faults in schools.
- 3.2.4** Computers are being introduced in early years establishments and special schools. These will increase the need for ICT Technician support.

4. STAFFING PROPOSALS AND GRADINGS

- 4.1** In summary, it is recommended that the technicians establishment should be 9 Senior Technicians and 29 Technicians which is an increase of 1 Senior Technician and 3.6 Technicians.

- 4.2** Head Teachers will continue to be responsible for the overall provision of the technician service in their school. Senior Technicians will allocate staff, manage staff absence, verify annual leave and take responsibility for operational issues including employee performance, quality and health and safety. The Chief Technician will continue to be responsible for the development of the Technicians Service.
- 4.3** A Senior Technician will be appointed to each secondary school with a school roll of 300 and over. This will increase the establishment of Senior Technicians from 8 to 9.
- 4.4** A whole school and thus more flexible approach will be adopted by technicians in their service delivery instead of the current departmental approach. Head teachers will have the authority to decide how many technicians of a specialist nature are needed to meet the needs of the school within the established complement. This authority will be exercised in consultation with technicians trade union representatives and other relevant stakeholders. It will be used to determine the technician complement of the school. This would only take place when a suitable vacancy becomes available.
- 4.5** Regular PAT testing within all schools as laid down by the Health and Safety Executive will be incorporated into all technicians duties to ensure that the department is complying with Health and Safety Regulations. It is essential that all technicians are fully trained and competent to carry out this activity. This activity will be properly scheduled having due regard to health and safety priorities and workload. This will lead to cost savings with the work being undertaken in-house instead of by using outside contractors. These savings will be used to offset any additional costs involved in increasing the technician establishment.
- 4.6** The current salary grade for Technician and Senior Technicians should be increased respectively from G1/2/Tech2 (Scale point 3-21) to Technical Grades 2-3 (spinal column point 17-26) and Technical Grade 3 (Scale point 22-26) Technical Grade 4 (spinal column 27-30) to reflect the increased responsibilities and duties of the posts. Appointment as a technician will require applicants to possess at least a National Certificate or equivalent qualification in a relevant field.
- 4.7** The proposed regradings for existing posts would be temporary pending the post's assessment within the single status job evaluation exercise.
- 4.8** The deletion of the post of AVA Technician will be revised and updated to be replaced by an ICT Technician. Where appropriate current AVA Technicians will be retrained as ICT Technicians as necessary to enable them to carry out the duties associated with the new post. The ICT Technician will undertake AVA duties as part of their job remit.
- 4.9** Rationalisation as indicated in para 3.1.7 is anticipated to release 1.2 FTE posts allowing a reallocation of resources.

- 4.10** With the increase in computers in primary schools, special schools and early years establishments it is proposed that an additional two ICT technicians be appointed to provide an effective ICT technician support to these establishments. For the Doon area it is proposed that the ICT Technician for the secondary school will support primary, special and early years establishments in this area.
- 4.11** The existing two ICT Technicians who are currently based in the Technicians Centre should be reviewed separately at a later date.
- 4.12** There will be a requirement in the short term for additional training and development for appropriate technicians to enable them to meet the requirements of the revised post. In addition, the introduction of EAGER within the Department of Educational and Social Services will also assist technicians to meet their development needs.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The financial implications arising from the recommendations arising from the report are outlined in Appendix B. The implementation date for existing employees will be 31 March 2002. Any new appointments will take effect from 16 August 2002.
- 5.2** In summary, the additional full year costs of the proposed regradings is £211,713. This can be met from within the Department's allocation from the McCrone Agreement and from savings accruing from PAT Testing.

6. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Nil

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1** The recommendations arising from the report have been discussed and agreed with the Trade Unions, who have been fully consulted at all stages. Similarly, the Corporate Personnel Department have been fully involved in all discussions.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** It is recommended that Elected Members:
- (i) approve the staffing and grading proposals in paragraph 4 of this report;
 - (ii) agree referral of these proposals to the Corporate Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee; and
 - (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

GS/JS/JH
2 May 2002

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century (the McCrone Agreement)
2. Time for Teaching, a report jointly issued by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and the Accounts Commission.

Implementation Officer: Graham Short

APPENDIX A

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

1. The schools' technician service should now have the following 3 categories of technicians (Science, Technical and ICT) together with a Senior Technician.
2. The appointment of Science Technicians should continue to be based on the existing school roll formula.
3. One Technical Technician should continue to be appointed to each secondary school irrespective of the school roll.
4. Secondary Schools with a school roll of more than 300 pupils should be entitled to a senior technician, who is appointed from within the establishment of technicians in the school.
5. Head Teachers will have the authority to determine within the technician complement for their school on how many technicians of a particular category are needed to meet curriculum activities.

APPENDIX B

Financial Implications – School Technician Service

Full Year Costs

CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT		PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT	
8 Senior Technicians graded Tech 3 =	£146,368	9 Senior Technicians graded Tech 4 =	£188,073
27.4 Technicians graded GS1/2 – Tech 2 =	£433,331	31 Technicians graded Tech 2-3 =	£567,176
Employers Costs (20.6%) =	£119,418	Employers Costs (20.6%) =	£155,581
TOTAL COST =	£699,117	TOTAL COST =	£910,830
Difference =	£211,713		

NOTE

This difference can be met from within the department's allocation from the McCrone agreement and PAT Testing.

AGENDA